BlueCross BlueShield of Oklahoma

Economics of Health Care

Part 3: Maximizing your health care dollar

So far in Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma's (BCBSOK's) *Economics of Health Care* series, we've identified health care costs by looking at a breakdown of the premium dollar and examining common health care cost drivers.

Rising health care costs are a concern for everyone. Finding a solution to this challenge is no easy task. However, there are small steps each of us can take to make a difference. Let's take a look at some of the ways in which each of us as individuals can maximize our health care dollars.

Part 1

Average health care premium dollar breakdown[1]

35¢	Hospital costs
33¢	Physician services
14¢	Drugs
5¢	Other medical services
6¢	Government payments, compliance, claims processing
4¢	Consumer services
+ 3¢	Insurer margin
$1.00	

Part 2

What are some of the biggest cost drivers?

- Prescription drugs
- Overuse and misuse of medical services
- Defensive medicine
- Medical advances
- Personal behavior
- Chronic conditions
- Preventable injuries
- Health care fraud
- Cost-shifting
- Uninsured individuals
- Inflation

Maximizing your health care dollar

Visiting your primary care doctor annually can help you keep tabs on your health and identify potential health issues early.

Become an Informed Health Care Consumer

Knowledge is power and one of the best ways to help curb health care spending is to become an informed consumer.

Know your health history. Are you at risk for heart disease or diabetes? Do you have high blood pressure? How old was your mother when she developed breast cancer? This type of basic information can help guide you in making decisions that impact your health positively. This information is also crucial in helping your doctor prescribe the most effective treatment for medical issues.

Schedule regular check-ups with your doctor. Visiting your primary care doctor annually can help you keep tabs on your health and identify potential health issues early – before they become more difficult and expensive to treat.

Ask questions. When you're at the doctor's office, make sure you ask questions if you don't understand something or if you have a concern. Here are some examples – Is this the right course of treatment for me? Are there other options for treatment? What is this medication used for? Is there a generic option available for this prescription?

Research health information from a variety of sources. Many organizations and websites offer health-related information. These include the American Heart Association *(heart.org)*, the American Cancer Society *(cancer.org)* and the American Diabetes Society *(diabetes.org)*. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma also provides information on a variety of health and wellness topics at *bcbsok.com*.

HOW CAN I HELP MINIMIZE COSTS?

* Report suspicious claim activity
* Choose generic drugs when available
* Call 24/7 Nurseline with questions
* Commit to being tobacco-free
* Consider diet and exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle
* Manage my health on Blue Access for Members℠
* Check with your doctor about immunizations for your child
* Ask whether a condition management program is right for you
* Research health care reform

Knowledge is power and one of the best ways to help curb health care spending is to become an informed consumer.

Maximizing your health care dollar

Adopting a healthier lifestyle may be challenging, but it is not impossible. Small changes can make a big difference.

Take Charge of Your Health

As Benjamin Franklin once said, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Many health care costs are directly related to personal behavior.[2] Unhealthy behaviors can result in chronic conditions. One study estimates that chronic illnesses cost our economy $1 trillion annually.[3]

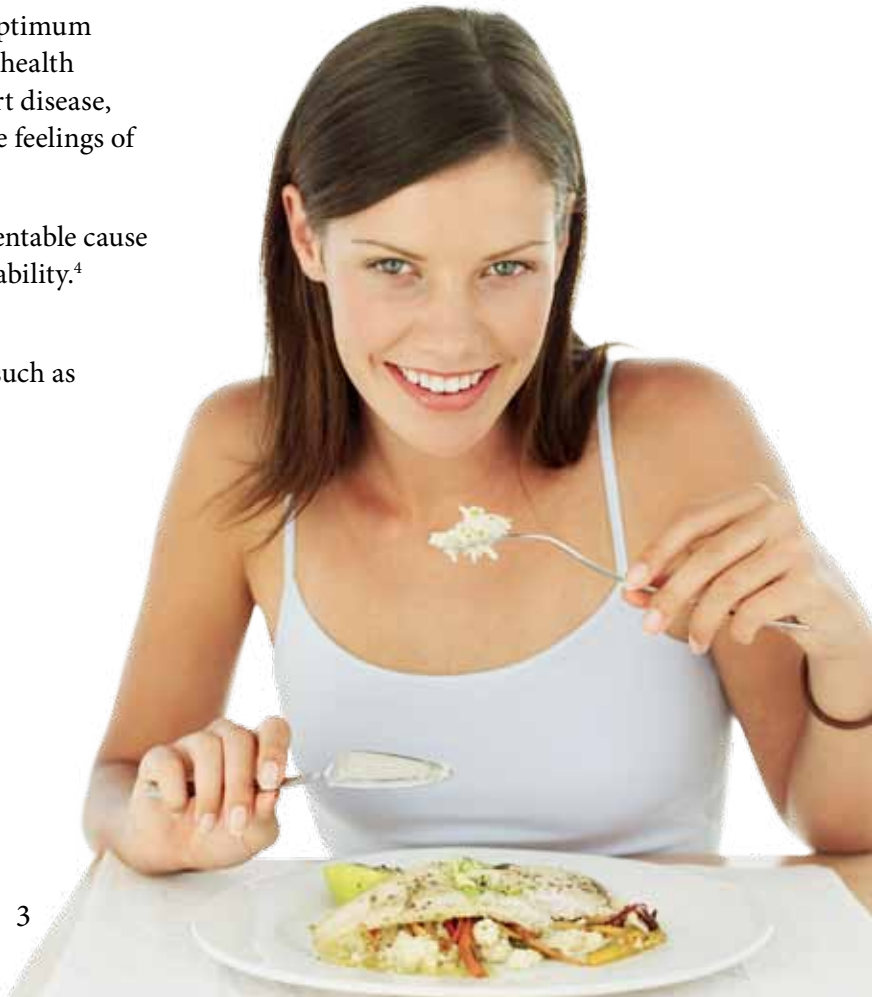
Adopting a healthier lifestyle may be challenging, but it is not impossible. Small changes can make a big difference. Here are just a few ways you can improve your health while helping to stabilize your health care costs.

Eat smart. Yes, you've heard it before. Making nutritious food choices can help prevent chronic health issues such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Exercise. Regular exercise is critical to maintaining optimum health. It helps to reduce your risk of developing certain health conditions – including obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, certain types of cancer and exercise may also help reduce feelings of anxiety or stress.

Live tobacco-free. Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death. In addition, tobacco use causes disease and disability.[4]

Manage chronic conditions. It's important to work with your doctor to ensure chronic conditions (such as diabetes and high blood pressure) are controlled.



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Help Prevent Health Care Fraud and Abuse

Health care fraud – an intentional misrepresentation, deception or intentional act of deceit for the purpose of greater reimbursement – is a key driver of rising health care costs. Approximately 3 percent of all health care spending or $68 billion annually is lost to health care fraud.[5]

Health care abuse is behavior that goes against and is inconsistent with acceptable business or medical practices, resulting in higher reimbursement.

Understand and review your service charges, and take note of any unusually high charges for regular services.

Here are some things you can do to help prevent health care fraud and abuse.

- **Review your health care charges.** Look over your Explanation of Benefits from your insurer and review receipts from your physician or pharmacist to ensure correct dates of service are recorded and that you are billed for the right services or medications.
- **Protect your health information.** Keep your insurance card and health care records in a safe place at all times.
- **Monitor your medications.** Count your pills each time that you pick up a prescription.
- **Report suspected fraud and abuse as soon as possible.** Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma members can call our Provider Fraud Hotline at 800-543-0867 to report suspected health care fraud.

1. America's Health Insurance Plans. PricewaterhouseCoopers' Factors Fueling Rising Healthcare Costs 2008.
2. The Wall Street Journal. How Safeway Is Cutting Health-Care Costs? June 12, 2009.
3. Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association. Building Tomorrow's Healthcare System: The Pathway to High-Quality, Affordable Care in America. October 2011.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking & Tobacco Use Fact Facts. www.cdc.gov, accessed March 8, 2012.
5. National Health Care Anti-Fraud Association. The Problem of Health Care Fraud.

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